



Emergency Management **UPDATE**

January 2000

No future shock for 21st-century hazmat

by Greg Britt
VDES Hazmat Field Manager

Looking back, 1999 was a big year for disasters worldwide. With two major earthquakes in Turkey killing thousands, the Oklahoma tornadoes and hurricanes Dennis and Floyd, emergency managers were definitely on the move.

In the past year, we had the usual hazmat incidents such as overturned tanker trucks, pesticide fires and sick building calls. However, we also had some unique situations such as a hazmat ship fire in Hampton Roads and a black powder truck incident on the Fairfax beltway.

Hurricane Floyd kept us busy as well with the release of thousands of gallons of petroleum into the floodwaters. Hazmat officers worked with local, state and federal agencies to corral hundreds of containers found floating down the Blackwater River which, at the time, expanded to cover more than 15 square city blocks in the city of Franklin and thousands of acres of agricultural and forest lands.

As the next century begins, we might wonder what challenges will face us in the new millennium. In my opinion, we can expect business as usual for the near term.

However, by 2025, experts say we can expect today's environmental issues to be amplified. As petroleum prices continue to fluctuate, most of the population will live closer to the workplace and use mass transit for commuting and inner-city shopping.

Alternative Fuel Vehicles (AFVs) will be in high demand and we will live in "Smart Houses" that operate totally by computer. Much time and effort have been spent looking for a feasible AFV that is practical and acceptable to the public.

Businesses may have to turn to AFVs as well. In 2000, business and government fleets in densely populated areas such as



Northern Virginia and Tidewater will be federally mandated to operate a portion of their fleet using alternative fuel. Transit systems, utility companies and some other commercial enterprises have already converted vehicles to operate on these fuels.

The most popular AFVs seem to favor battery power, hydrogen gas or liquefied propane gas (LPG)/natural gas-powered motors. Each has its own unique advantages and disadvantages, which affect their current use as well as long-term plans for states and localities.

As their practicality and popularity grow, AFVs will change the face of emergency response. When you consider their relatively short distance capability, the likely steady increase in population density and requirements for facilities to refuel these vehicles (charging stations for electric vehicles or EVs, hydrogen and LPG fueling stations, etc.), the way we will train and respond will take on new dimensions.

We will need to ensure we are properly trained and have appropriate field guides, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and policies in place to protect the public as well as first responders.

All the incidents I mentioned earlier required diverse working teams that could function effectively within an incident command structure. We can expect this structure to remain viable in the new millennium. As we continue training responders for diversity, however, it is imperative to also intensify the focus on prevention.

One of the precepts of prevention is that the majority of accidents do not just happen, they are caused. For years, we have been teaching awareness, safety, quality control, technical training, recycling, inspections and enforcement. Many manufacturers have already converted their facilities to the use of environmentally safe products.

As we look toward tomorrow, we must not be subdued by the technology developed to make life easier for us, our families, neighbors and friends. We are honor bound to expand our knowledge and practices by well-thought-out preplanning and training to continue to protect the public to standards already set.

VDES gets the message

As of Jan. 10, VDES will use an automated voice mail system at our Trade Court location in Richmond.

The system will not affect calls to the Virginia Emergency Operations Center but will offer the option of leaving detailed voice mail messages when staff cannot be reached.

Callers can use current employee phone numbers or our main number (804) 897-6500. All calls received on an 897 prefix will be routed to an automated call directory with a variety of options.

Comments and suggestions about the new system are invited and can be directed to Michael Cline or George Foresman on the main VDES number.

Preservation vs. disaster cleanup in the OLD Dominion

Is it trash or treasure? When disaster strikes, lives and property are often left in ruin and this question lies at the crux of the cleanup efforts that follow.

As the birthplace of eight U.S. presidents and the first permanent English settlement in America, Virginia's historic roots run especially deep, making preservation an essential part of response and recovery for a community affected by a disaster.

VDES Chemical Emergency Preparedness Branch Manager George Roarty served on the task force that developed a short-term infrastructure recovery plan for both Franklin and Southampton County following Hurricane Floyd flooding.

He says the state's rich heritage plays a large part in supporting local and state economies, and it is important for jurisdictions to understand what services agencies like the Virginia Department of Historic Resources can provide prior to and following a disaster (i.e., technical assistance and resources, historic review, etc.).

"The impacts of a natural disaster on historic properties are not always evident or considered to the degree they should be," says Roarty. "The Petersburg tornado (1993) and Franklin flood demonstrate the impact disasters can have on the state's historical heritage as well as the revenue generated from these properties through tourism."

According to FEMA, historic properties are more than just old buildings or well-known national sites. They also include resources such as roads, bridges and archaeological sites. The National Register is only a partial listing and all states have additional properties that are also significant.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires a federal agency to consider any adverse effects of projects, including Public Assistance and Mitigation, on historic properties and resolve the adverse effects with a negotiated agreement.

Mary Ruffin Hanbury of the Portsmouth Regional Office of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources joined Angela Tweedy, historic preservation specialist with FEMA's Historic Preservation Program, in Franklin once the floodwaters went down to review buildings proposed for demolition as health and safety threats.

Though their regional office doesn't normally conduct federal project reviews, Hanbury says she stepped in because of their close proximity to Franklin and pre-existing relationships with key players.



Both Tweedy and Hanbury agree that, while demolition is considered an adverse effect, it is often necessary in disaster scenarios. Hanbury says National Register eligibility does not preclude demolition and the process often boils down to research, photographic documentation and negotiation that generally occurs in Richmond.

"As we walked around with George (Roarty) and a couple of people from FEMA, Angela and I saw buildings that could easily be dismissed looking through the eyes of someone worried about safety, health and welfare," says Hanbury.

"We told them why it would be a loss for some of these buildings to go down. It's really heartbreaking for someone in my position to see something that's important architecturally and say 'you're right, this building has to come down.'"

Tweedy says it is a good idea to use historic preservation specialists after a disaster to survey large project areas for historic resources to get a broad-scale perspective on National Register eligibility. By doing this early in the process, she says, FEMA can concentrate their review efforts on eligible properties as public assistance and mitigation projects develop so historic preservation doesn't cause delays.

"In Franklin, the process was not ideal from a historic review standpoint," recalls Tweedy. "FEMA knew there was a clearly defined historic district with contributing and noncontributing properties and there were proposed demolitions in those areas. We were most concerned with the properties that contributed to the significance of the district. Due to miscommunication between local, state and FEMA officials, three contributing properties had already been torn down by the time we arrived."

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Could you spot the contributing property? Actually, both buildings in the city of Franklin have been nominated as historically significant.

Preservation Pointers

☐ Pre-Disaster Planning.

Maintain updated assessments of buildings/properties listed on the state, local or national registers/inventories. Know the climate of public sentiment regarding these properties and coordinate with your local planner for possible technical assistance.

☐ Preliminary Damage Assessment.

Review damaged sites for historic properties and ensure that Preliminary Damage Assessment inspectors note this information in their reports to the state and FEMA.

☐ Applicants Briefing.

Relay information about damages to these properties to the official conducting the briefing and review the information packet for historical review guidance.

☐ Kickoff Meeting.

Review your list of known damaged sites with your local historic preservation planner or coordinator. Convey all relevant information to the FEMA official in your initial kickoff meeting.

☐ Project Formulation.

Provide complete and accurate descriptions of the damaged site and proposed scope of work. Complete the Special Considerations Questionnaire for each project and alert FEMA when the project will not be returned to pre-disaster condition, use or function.

☐ Project Approval.

Understand terms and conditions for FEMA's programs and understand any attempt to avoid historic review may jeopardize FEMA funding.

Funding to flow into Southwestern Virginia

Five drought-stricken Virginia localities received an early Christmas present when they learned they were eligible for reimbursement to offset the costs of providing potable water to their citizens.

Governor James Gilmore has approved emergency drought assistance to be offered to Russell, Wise, Dickenson and Tazewell counties as well as the city of Norton. VDES will administer this program on a reimbursement cost-share basis covering 75 percent of eligible expenses.

According to Roy Seward, director of policy, planning and research for the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, about 51 localities have asked Gilmore for drought disaster designation due to 1999 losses and roughly 100 localities have been approved thus far for this designation (includes contiguous cities/counties).

"For the 51 localities assessed for drought damages, the estimated value of agricultural crops losses totaled nearly \$165 million — not including farm income losses for livestock or poultry production," says Seward.

For communities like Dickenson and Russell counties, hauling water can be a budget buster. Russell County Emergency Services Coordinator Judy Cooling estimates they have spent around \$50,000, or about one and a half times her total operating budget for the year. In Dickenson County, Emergency Services Coordinator B. L. Ratliff says they have drained the emergency management budget of about \$30,000 on water tanks and don't have anything left for the winter months ahead.

"Our problem started back in June," says Ratliff. "It is the worst (drought situation) I can ever remember and I don't see any immediate relief coming. Wells that have never been dry are being depleted — not just in one area but across the entire county. Since July 1, we have hauled 500,000 gallons up to the tanks we have sited throughout the county. We have been hauling water seven days a week (at times) and still have 65 people on the waiting list for tanks."

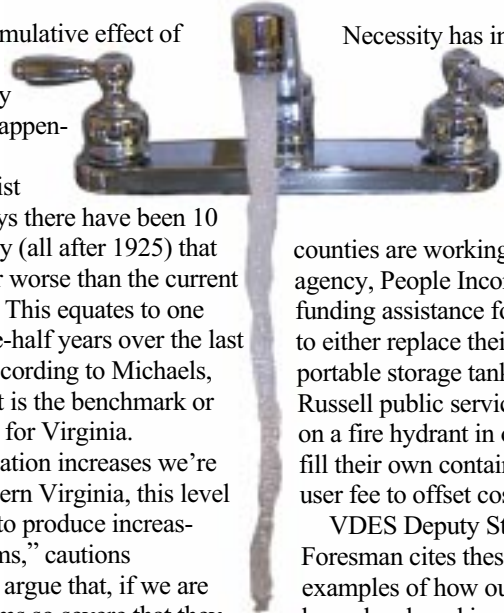
Cooling says they are still hauling an average of 6,000 to 10,000 gallons of water per week but plan to pull their tanks in after Jan. 1 to avoid possible freezing/bursting and protect their investment.

VEOC Deputy Director of Operations Fred Vincent says there has been some sort of drought condition for the past five years as each year's losses build upon the previous

one. He says this cumulative effect of years of economic losses and loans only intensifies what is happening now.

State Climatologist Patrick Michaels says there have been 10 events in this century (all after 1925) that have been similar or worse than the current drought in this area. This equates to one every seven and one-half years over the last two generations. According to Michaels, the 1930-31 drought is the benchmark or "reference drought" for Virginia.

"Given the population increases we're seeing in Southwestern Virginia, this level of drought is going to produce increasingly severe problems," cautions Michaels. "I would argue that, if we are seeing water problems so severe that they require emergency measures on a seven and one-half year rotation, we should look at adapting local infrastructure to cope with a drought on a 1930s magnitude."

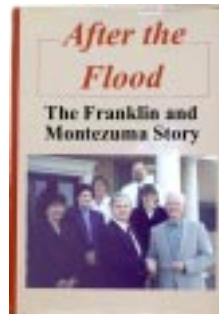


Necessity has indeed become the mother of invention in this area as they seek fresh approaches to an old problem.

Cooling says both Russell and Dickenson counties are working with the public service agency, People Incorporated, Inc., to provide funding assistance for low-income families to either replace their wells or purchase portable storage tanks. She adds that the Russell public service authority has put a tap on a fire hydrant in one area so people can fill their own containers. They then pay a user fee to offset costs.

VDES Deputy State Coordinator George Foresman cites these responses as prime examples of how our community partners have developed innovative solutions to a unique problem. Now, their greatest need is for financial support to continue the effort. Through this state program, the spigot will soon open to replenish local funds.

Two flooded cities forge lasting friendship



It was the best of times, it was the worst of times..."

Though it wasn't the French Revolution, the intertwined stories of triumph and sacrifice that emerged from Franklin, Va., and

Montezuma, Ga., read like a modern "Tale of Two Cities" of which the venerable Charles Dickens might be proud.

Established at the convergence of railroad and river travel routes, these two communities might have gone on writing their own separate but uncannily similar histories had it not been for a dark and destructive figure named Floyd.

As Franklin struggled to rebuild from Hurricane Floyd, representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (VDHCD) and the Virginia Mainstreet Program provided a mentor and sister city that had also experienced recent flooding.

"Montezuma was chosen due to several similarities between their flood in 1994

and ours," says Downtown Development Director Nanci Drake. "In the majority of floods, the water comes in and goes out quickly. The floodwaters stayed up six days in Montezuma and nine days in Franklin."

As a city about half the size of Franklin, Montezuma's losses of about 54 businesses are comparable to the 182 displaced in Franklin, and their central business district was severely damaged as well. In November, Drake joined a delegation dispatched to visit the town to compare notes. This group also included Franklin's mayor, city manager and a local businessperson as well as VDHCD and FEMA representatives.

"It provided us an opportunity to sit down with someone who had been through a disaster like our own and compare what we had done," explains Drake. "Things are going so fast, you're making quick decisions and hoping they are the right ones. It was good to find out that many of the decisions made in the heat of the moment were good ones and that a community can definitely come back from a catastrophic storm."

Drake says they established an immediate rapport with their Montezuma counterparts.

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Training Calendar

Emergency Management

Hazardous Weather and Flooding Preparedness

Jan. 11-13/Virginia Beach
Feb. 29-March 2/Charlottesville

Disaster Related Needs of Seniors and Persons with Disabilities

Jan. 26/Williamsburg

Basic Public Information Officer Course, Feb. 2-4/Richmond

Decision Making in a Crisis

Feb. 8/Richmond

Coordinator's Briefing

Feb. 10/Williamsburg

Emergency Planning Workshop

Feb. 15-17/Virginia Beach

ISC/EOC Interface

Feb. 23-24/Newport News

Reservist Training

Rapid Assessment Workbook Overview, Jan. 14/Richmond

Scholarship application deadline draws near

Applicants for the Addison E. Slayton, Jr., Scholarship must forward their submissions for consideration by Feb. 1. Established in 1998, this VEMA scholarship was created to assist individuals with serious interest in emergency management in earning a degree. Interested candidates can use the enclosed form or download a copy at www.vdes.state.va.us/confince/vema.htm. Contact Lynda Furr Price at (804) 748-1236 for more details.

VEOC Message/Mission Flow Exercise, Feb. 2/Richmond

VEOC Tabletop Exercise

Feb. 3/Richmond

Emergency Information System (EIS) Training

Feb. 3/Richmond

Reservist Program Orientation

Feb. 23/Richmond

Information and Planning Branch Workshops

Feb. 29/Richmond

Search and Rescue

GSAR Institute (Part I)

Jan. 21-22/Blue Ridge

SAR Council

Jan. 29/Richmond

Field Team Member (Part I)

Feb. 11-13/Newport News

Inland SAR School

Feb. 14-18/Yorktown

GSAR Institute (Part II)

Feb. 25-27/Blue Ridge

Technological Hazards

Chemistry of Hazardous Materials

Feb. 7-18/Newport News

Register online today!

Preservation (continued from page 2)

Through Programmatic Agreements, FEMA is helping to expedite the historic preservation review process while administering Public and Flood Mitigation Assistance and Hazards Mitigation Grant programs. She says states negotiate this agreement and that Virginia's agreement is still being coordinated at the state level.

"Ideally, states sign these programmatic agreements before a disaster so they can be easily implemented when it occurs," explains Tweedy. "It's really the federal agency working through the state to determine initial National Register eligibility and adverse effects."

To help further simplify the process, she says Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for historic review are in development to be incorporated into Public Assistance Programs. Historic preservation issues should be addressed at every stage of the disaster beginning with a scoping meeting soon after the disaster declaration. For more information, contact Angela Tweedy at (202) 646-3193.

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Tale of Two Cities (continued from page 3)

She says they "felt like they'd known each other forever" and adds their new friends were impressed with many Franklin response efforts such as a flood fund of private donations and a mobile unit park set up to enable displaced business owners to resume retail operations.

"They brought in state officials to talk with us about what their agencies could do and how they set up donations and handled volunteers wanting to help," says Drake.

In December, the relationship was strengthened further when a Montezuma delegation toured Franklin and shared their success story with citizens and businesspersons.

Montezuma's (Flood) Revenge (Recovery Tips from Georgia)

- Publicize your plight by keeping your locality in the news.
- Establish a forgivable loan program for businesses.
- Cultivate strong leadership in the business community to quiet naysayers and keep them on track.
- Coordinate volunteer and materials distribution efforts throughout the crisis.
- Let state/federal agencies explain regulatory restrictions.
- Place a representative from the Municipal League/Association of Counties in the state EOC to help coordinate with other cities to fill needs and direct offers of aid.



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